Namdhari (Kuka) Movement and its Founder

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INTRODUCTION

It is evident from the history that in 18th & 19th centuries our Punjabi society was full of many social and religious evils so, many socio – religious movements started in India as well as in the Punjab. The main motive of these movements was to up root those socio – religious evils . The Namdhari movement which is also called as kuka movement , was actually a religious movement but harsh behaviour of the British government with the leaders of this movement , drew them into political sphere . The Namdharis are called kukas because they recited loudly the name of god absorbing in him . so , they were called kukas . They were called Namdhari because instead of performing other religious rites they emphasize much on the recitation of the Nam (the name of god)

Founder of the kuka movement was Baba Balak Singh Ji . He belonged to a village 'sarwala' of district 'Attock[1]. Balak Singh had been influenced by another teacher Jawahar Mal 'Sain' of village sarai saleh near Haripur[2]. Jawahar Mal had many followers who were practicing Nam[3]. Balak Singh was one of them . Baba Balak Singh deputed to Hazro to look after the sikh congregations there . He spent most of his time in reciting 'Adi – granth' . The impact of Balak Singh's personality was evidently considerable for by the time he died in 1862 . It is said that Baba Ram Singh chose his successors before he died in 1862 . under what circumstances and in what way Baba Balak Singh choose Ram Singh as his successor is not known[4]. Ram Singh shifted to Bhaini Sahib his native village as a result headquarter of his mission shifted to Bhaini with the passage of time .

Baba Ram Singh Ji was born on Basant Panchmi on 3 Feb , 1815 A D at village Bhain Arayian situated district Ludhiana. His father's name was Jassa Singh. He belonged to Ramgarhia sikh caste. He did carpentry and fed his family. His mother's name was Sada Kaur who was a decent women of religious views[4] Baba Ram Singh Ji had got knowledge about Punjabi in gurumukhi script , from his mother. At young age , he had learnt much gurbani , other sikh scriptures and holy book Adi – granth.[5]

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Baba Ram Singh was seven years old when he was married. Name of his wife was 'Jassan'[6] who is known as Mata Jassan among the Namdharis . He had two dauthers named Nand kaur and Daya Kaur . As he grew he joined Maharaja Ranjit Singh Khalsa Army in 1836 . Baba Ram Singh's Regiment was going to Peshawar then on the way , it stayed at Hazro . There Baba Ram Singh Ji hear praise of Baba Balak Singh Ji . He had much devotion for Sadhu , Saints . In 1845 – 46 he left the army and reverted to his parental profession . But this was matter of secondary importance Baba Ram Singh was a staunch follower of Sikhism . He wanted his followers to shed off superstitions and cowardice .

Ram Singh transferred the kuka centre from Hazro to his own village of Bhaini in Ludhiana district.[7] From 1847 to 1857 Baba Ram Singh Ji preached the Sikhs according to the teachings of Baba Balak Singh . Baba Ram Singh found the Namdhari sect in April 13, 1857 at Sri Bhaini Sahib in the Ludhiana district of Punjab[8] Baba Ram Singh appointed a six member committee for preaching Sikhism in different areas of the Punjab.[9] From the very beginning Bhai Ram Singh focused his attention on fighting the wide spread prevalence of ills in society and mobilized his followers to awaken them to the cause of freedom from foreign rule .

Baba Ram Singh's firm view was that the cause of the degradation of the society and loss of independence in the Punjab was the fall of moral and spiritual values . He therefore decided to use of same technique , the same methods and the same principles for meeting the challenge before him as Guru Gobind Singh . For this purpose a organization was urgently called for because without it he could not achieve the object of his mission

Baba Ram Singh Ji hated bitterly British race , British government and their administration of Punjab . He wanted to set Punjab free from rule of the British through all possible ways . Due to activities of the kukas Punjab government had doubt towards them . In 1872 A.D Baba Ram Singh Ji arrested by the government and keeping him in Allahabad Jail for some time , he was deported to Rangoon.[10]

After Baba Ram Singh , his Brother Hari Singh (Budh Singh) looked after the affairs of the kukas . His period was almost uneventful nothing happened that could result in the further estrangement of relations between the government and the kukas . He died on May 17 , 1906 . He was succeeded on the gaddi by his son Baba Partap Singh.[11] The new leader of the Namdhari was also inspired by strong urge for special reforms but he could not do much in that direction . After his death on August 21 , 1959 his eldest son Baba Jagjit Singh was deputed to head the sect. [12] He died on December 13, 2012.

During the leadership of Baba Partap Singh there was

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emergence of a new Namdhari sect at Naushehra Majha Singh . The sect led by sant Harnam Singh . Both however took Baba Ram Singh as Guru .

Sant Harnam Singh born in 1877 A.D and belonged to a rich Khatri family of Quilla Sobha Singh in Sialkot During his childhood , he was influenced by Saints , Later as a youngman became a member of the namdhari section . Afterwards he went to Bhaini Sahib and meditated a lot.[13] After getting inlighted he returned to his village . The people of his village was attracted towards him . These people ignore the namdharis main leader at Bhaini Sahib by celebrating hola at Quilla instead of at Bhani sahib which was the normal practice of namdharis . This was the beginning of separation between the Bhaini Sahib and Quilla Sobha Singh groups . After the partition of India in 1947 , Sant Harnam Singh Came to Naushehra Majha Singh .[14]

A distinctive feature of these new namdharis was their uniform . The original Namdhari uniform was made of a white 'Kurta' , White 'Pjama' and a white 'turban' tied in a special way . However Sant Harnam Singh Substituted a blue piece of cloth tied in a particular style in the white turban and added a blue kamarkasa (waist band) as a uniform.[15] Sant Harnam Singh died in 1980 and now a trust is looking after all the affairs relating to this sect of the Namdharis . It is also called 'Neel Panthi'.[16]

In the view of above discussion , It may be said that Baba Ram Singh founded Sant Khalsa in 1857 . He was also precursor of Programme of betterment of women . He tried to create a social consciousness through religious principles . Baba Hari Singh maintained status quo where as Baba Partap Singh accorded a new justification to the beliefs and practices . Emergence of a new namdhari sect under Sant Harnam Singh was an important development of Baba's period .

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Author's information seems to be biased and totaly incomplete. Sri Bhaini Sahib is the head quarters of Namdhari Panth and is universally acknowledged as such.

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